

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated March 9, 2009. Claims 20, 24, 25, 27 and 29 remain pending in the application, of which Claims 20, 24, 25 and 27 are independent. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 24 and 27 were objected to for informalities that have been attended to by amendment. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections are respectfully requested.

Claims 20, 24, 25, 27 and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 7,441,002 (Takeda) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,822,754 (Shiohara) and Japan 2000-163237 (Migishima). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The present invention concerns selecting a print shop to process a print order, where a two step selection process to narrow down candidate print shops is performed. In a first step, a user apparatus notifies a use condition that indicates a print shop area to a print management apparatus. Here, the use condition is set by a user utilizing displayed page based on image data transmitted by the print management apparatus. The management apparatus executes a search and print shop information for a plurality of print shops satisfying the use condition is obtained as first candidates to be used for each of respective print orders of a plurality of print data different from each other. A single print data is then formed in accordance with a print condition that is set by the user via a user interface that does not include a setting for the print shop area. The print condition is different from the use condition. Extracted from the first candidates are print

shops having a print ability satisfying the print condition of the single print data, and the extracted print shops are second candidates. The user then selects one print shop from the second candidates and a print order is formed accordingly to include the selected print shop.

Referring specifically to the claims, amended independent Claim 24 is directed to an information processing system for processing information between a user apparatus and a print management apparatus through communication via a network, wherein said print management apparatus comprises print shop information searching means for searching for information of a plurality of print shops based on a received use condition indicating a print shop area, and print shop information transmitting means for transmitting the print shop information searched by the print shop information searching means to said user apparatus, and wherein said user apparatus comprises notifying means for notifying said print management apparatus of a use condition indicating a print shop area, the use condition to be notified being set according to a user operation using an operation page displayed on the user apparatus based on image information generated by said print management apparatus, print shop information obtaining means for receiving, from the print shop information transmitting means, the print shop information for the plurality of print shops searched by the print shop searching means each satisfying the notified use condition, as first candidates of print shops to be used for each of respective print orders of a plurality of print data different from each other, print data forming means for forming single print data by using a user interface generated by a printer driver installed in said user apparatus, in accordance with a print condition which is set according to an operation of the user, the user interface not including setting of the print shop area, and the

print condition being different from the use condition, extracting means for extracting print shops having a print ability satisfying the print condition of the single print data formed by said print data forming means, as second candidates to be used for the print order of the single print data from the plurality of print shops included in the print shop information received as the first candidates by said print shop information obtaining means, selection means for selecting, in accordance with a user operation, one print shop to order print processing of said single print data formed by said print data forming means, from among the print shops extracted as the second candidates by said extracting means, and a print order forming means for forming a print order, including the designation of the selected print shop.

Claim 20 is directed to the user apparatus aspect of system Claim 24, while Claims 25 and 27 are computer medium and method claims, respectively, that substantially correspond to Claim 20.

The applied art, alone or in any permissible combination, is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of independent Claims 20, 24, 25 and 27, and in particular, is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the features of a user apparatus, that communicates with a print management apparatus via a network, i) receiving, print shop information for a plurality of print shops each satisfying a notified use condition indicating a print shop area, as first candidates of print shops to be used for each of respective print orders of a plurality of print data different from each other, ii) extracting print shops having a print ability satisfying a print condition which is used to form a single print data and which is different from the use condition, as second candidates to be used for the print order of the single print data from the plurality of print shops included in the print shop

information received as the first candidates, and iii) selecting, in accordance with a user operation, one print shop to order print processing of the formed single print data, from among the print shops extracted as the second candidates.

Takeda discloses an electronic mail printing system in which an output destination management server 16 manages performances and locations of print apparatuses 24 to search a print apparatus which satisfies a requirement provided from a terminal apparatus 12 (step S203), so that the terminal apparatus 12 designates an output destination from among the print apparatuses included in the search result transmitted (step S204) from the output destination management server 16. However, in this reference, the terminal apparatus 12 provides the requirement only to the output destination management server 16 and it is only the output destination management server that selects the output destination from the search result. This is one-step/one-condition selection. Takeda therefore fails to disclose the two-step selection of the print apparatus to order the print process, while the present invention adopts the two-step selection of the print shop, attained by the print management apparatus and user apparatus as clearly recited in each of the amended independent claims.

Shiohara discloses a print data generation system in which a print data generation apparatus 21 receives, from a print apparatus 31, print processing information indicating a status of the print apparatus 31 (step S45) to select a print apparatus 31a suitable for print contents on the basis of the print processing information (step S47), while if a user does not accept (i.e., cancel) the selected print apparatus 31a (step S49), then the print data generation apparatus 21 designates a print apparatus 31e which is located near the user position 54, instead of the selected print apparatus 31a (steps S51 and S52). That

is, in this reference, the print apparatus is merely selected automatically on the basis of only the print processing information received from the print apparatus 31. In this connection, it should be noted that when the print apparatus 31a selected based on the print processing information is canceled by the user, the reference Shiohara merely re-selects the print apparatus 31e located near the user position 54, regardless of the print processing information or other condition set by the user. Shiohara therefore fails to disclose anything that, when combined with Takeda, would have resulted in the two-step selection of the invention.

Migishima discloses a print control apparatus arranged such that a print controller unit 101 first reads out processing load of each print apparatus from a storage apparatus 115 to select a print apparatus on the basis of the read-out processing load, and then if a plurality of print apparatuses are selected on the basis of the read-out processing load, further reads out characteristics of each printer apparatus from a storage apparatus 116 to finally select one print apparatus. However, in this reference, only the printer controller unit 101 selects a transmission destination of print job data received from a host computer, on the basis of the processing load and characteristics of each print apparatus, read out respectively from the internal storages apparatuses of the print controller unit 101 itself. Migishima therefore fails to disclose anything that, when combined with Takeda and/or Shiohara, would have resulted in the two-step selection of the invention.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, amended independent Claims 20, 24, 25 and 27, as well as the claims dependent therefrom, are believed to be allowable.

No other matters having been raised, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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